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CAVALRY ROLES AND MISSIONS, (U)
1979 R R BATTREALL

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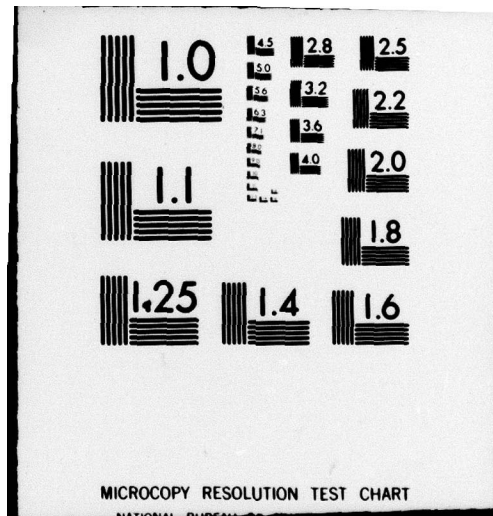
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TO: Commandant, U. S. Army Armor Center
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The attached article, Cavalry Roles and Missions, by
Colonel R. R. Battreal, has been reviewed by cognizant
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No further clearance is considered necessary and I have
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FOR THE CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

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Colonel R. R. Battreall was commissioned from the US Military Academy in 1949 after enlisted service in the Army Air Forces and holds an MA in English from the University of PA. His commissioned service includes over eight years in the 14th, 11th, and 3d ACRs, a year with 1 Cav Div in Korea, and 3 1/2 years in Vietnam as Sr. Advisor, 4th ARVN Cavalry; Sr. Advisor, RVNAF Armor Command; and Chief of Staff, Army Advisory Group. Other assignments include USAREUR HQ, two tours at West Point (Dept of English and Dept of Tactics), SJA at USSOUTHCOM, and Deputy Chief of the US Military Mission to Saudi Arabia. A graduate of the Army War College, he is presently Director of Armor Doctrine at the US Army Armor School. He will retire on 31 July 1979 after a combined total of almost 36 years' service.

This article was written in his official capacity and has been approved by MG Thomas P. Lynch, Commandant of the US Army Armor Center, as the official Fort Knox position on the subject.

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CAVALRY ROLES AND MISSIONS

BY: Colonel R. R. Battreall

SAPA-FOI

DATE: 31 JUL 1979

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INTRODUCTION.

There has been of late considerable confusion as to just what cavalry - both armored and air - contributes to the overall outcome of battle: why do we need cavalry? Hearing this question, cavalymen have tended to react in anger - which achieves nothing. To the practicing cavalryman who knows his business, the nature and value of cavalry's contributions are self-evident. He therefore challenges the motives, if not the heredity, of the questioner; forgetting that cavalry operations are an art with only a relatively few skillful practitioners and that it is possible for men of both intelligence and good will not, in fact, to understand. After all, two-thirds of our active cavalry regiments are engaged in border patrol in an area which non-participants are forbidden to enter. Even during the all-too-infrequent major field exercises where cavalry units have full scope to perform all their various roles, other participants are busy with their own tasks and see only brief fragments, or none at all, of the cavalry's actual work.

When the cavalryman does recognize the question's legitimacy, he attempts to educate the questioner: normally too fast and in too much detail. He discourses learnedly about route, zone, and area reconnaissance and splits semantic hairs in defining the nice distinctions between "screen", "guard", "protect", and "defend". The result is normally that both he and his listener lose sight of the forest in their examination of individual trees and bushes. This paper attempts to define the forest - cavalry roles and missions - without developing each of the many tactics and techniques involved in their execution.

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WHAT IS CAVALRY? Cavalry, both armored and air, remains what it has always been: a highly mobile force specifically organized, equipped, and trained for employment over wide frontages at considerable distance from the main friendly force. This does not necessarily mean that cavalry's equipment is different from that of other fighting units. It does mean that the equipment is put together differently to facilitate the semi-independent operations of small units inherent in covering wide frontages.

In tank and mechanized infantry operations, company-team commanders can usually see and control all of their platoons simultaneously. Indeed, battalion task force commanders strive to position themselves where they can see and control at least the two or more company teams making their main effort at the critical point. In contrast, cavalry platoons are routinely separated so widely that the troop commander cannot see more than one, if he can actually see any at all. Most often, even the platoon leader cannot see all of his squads but must control one or more of them by radio. Special training for this type of employment is obviously required.

This means that cavalry units are characterized by the mixing of the various systems required for autonomous operations at a much lower level than in other types of unit. Whereas tank and mechanized infantry companies are essentially single-system organizations, and it is unusual for anything less than a battalion task force to be employed separately; cavalry platoons presently contain both scouts and tanks, mortars are added at troop level, and non-divisional squadrons have organic field artillery. Thus it is feasible to assign separate missions to platoons.

Some will question the wisdom, or even the possibility, of such small unit operations on the modern battlefield; but we must retain this capability or find ourselves unable to cover wide frontages in vague situations without

committing unaffordable numbers of maneuver battalions at other than the critical point. And we must remember that there will always be such wide areas between those critical points where the intense battles are fought. When the situation requires cavalry to concentrate, it can of course do so; and when it does it will be found to have a surprising quantity of sheer, brute fighting power. A unit capable of fighting effectively while dispersed can always concentrate: the reverse is not necessarily true.

An important difference in perspective also distinguishes cavalry - both armored and air - from other type units. Scouts are the soul of cavalry. All other systems in a cavalry unit exist to support the scout. In contrast, tank and mechanized infantry units are built around tanks and rifle squads, respectively. If you don't have scouts, you don't have cavalry.

To rephrase the opening statement of this section, then, cavalry - whether armored or air - is a highly mobile force consisting of a mixture of weapon systems organized around the scout and trained for semi-autonomous platoon operations within the framework of their troops and squadrons in order to cover wide frontages at extended distances from the main friendly force.

WHAT DOES CAVALRY DO? Cavalry fulfills three basic and closely related functions: reconnaissance, security, and economy of force. These traditional functions are inherent to warfare. They are valid on today's battlefield and will still be valid on tomorrow's. Some force must fulfill them, and the force that does so is cavalry whether called so or not. In current doctrinal terminology, these functions are integral subsets of the broader "target-servicing" function. Let us discuss each in turn.

Reconnaissance is the directed effort in the field to collect information of the enemy and the area of operations. A wide and increasing variety of sensor

systems contribute significantly to reconnaissance under the mantle of the "surveillance/fusion" function. Cavalry both benefits from and adds to the information collected by sensors by virtue of two unique attributes:

- ° Cavalry reconnaissance consists of direct observation by specifically trained human beings. Unlike acoustic, magnetic, electronic, photo, and other sensors, they can apply judgment to what they see. Moreover, they can give real-time reports in much more detail: not merely "numerous moving armored vehicles at ____" but "15 T64 tanks, 27 BMPs, and 2 ZSU23-4s moving south at 20 kph in deployed formation from ____". Not merely "there is still a bridge at ____" but "the bridge at ____ is still intact. Its abutments and stringers are sound, and it will carry Class 70 traffic one way".

With modern vision aids, they can do this under all visibility conditions. Cavalry can therefore be cued by sensors, focusing its attention on specific points to confirm or deny the sensor's information and develop it in more meaningful detail. Alternatively, cavalry can cover areas where there are no sensors; or it can be sent, with or without sensors, to particularly critical areas of interest the force commander.

- ° Cavalry can do something about what it sees. Unlike sensors, cavalry can maneuver indefinitely to maintain continuous contact with its target, reporting every act as it occurs. Alternatively, cavalry can attack to develop the situation further, or it can either delay or defend to disrupt the enemy's plans. This attribute is what places cavalry reconnaissance under target servicing rather than surveillance/fusion.

Reconnaissance is required in conjunction with both offensive and defensive operations. It may be conducted in whatever direction - forward, flanks, or rear - the force commander desires. Regardless of the setting, trained cavalry scouts are alert as they move to detect and report anything of note about the area itself which is different from what the map shows: a new stand of trees or an old one chopped down altering intervisibility, blown bridges or other obstacles and bypasses thereto, new buildings or old ones destroyed, etc. When they detect the enemy they develop the situation aggressively: by stealth if possible, by force if required. It is for this reason that scouts require weapons of their own and the support of friendly tanks or attack helicopters. It is of limited interest to the force commander to know where the enemy's first line of security outposts is located. He is more interested in where the main body is, how it is disposed, and what it is doing. To penetrate enemy security and gain this information (called "developing the situation") the cavalry must be able to fight. Moreover, it would be difficult to find scouts willing to risk finding the enemy without the ability to defend themselves and the certainty of support from a big, tough friend when needed.

Aggressive reconnaissance by properly organized, equipped, and trained cavalry fulfills the commander's need to "see the battlefield".

Security is the inseparable other side of the reconnaissance coin. The force commander gains an appreciable degree of security from the mere knowledge that the enemy is - or is not - at a certain place. He gains still more from the cavalry's ability to fight. The essence of security is to guarantee that the main body is never surprised: that it has adequate time to prepare to meet any approaching enemy on favorable terms or to avoid him. The requisite time is gained by a combination of how far away the enemy can be detected and how hard the cavalry can fight to

delay or destroy him. The terms (screen, guard, protect) which describe varying degrees of intensity are largely academic. The force commander determines how long they can hold by how far out he sends them and how wide or narrow a front he assigns: a platoon can inflict a certain delay on an approaching regiment, a troop can inflict more, and a squadron can destroy the regiment.

As reconnaissance, security missions may be performed in any direction and in conjunction with either offensive or defensive operations. Covering forces, flank guards, and rear area security are all subsets of security in which the mission is to eliminate the enemy if possible but in any event to ensure that no force capable of interfering with the main body is allowed to close before adequate preparations have been made. A much tougher security task is counter-reconnaissance in which the mission is not only to prevent units from interfering but also to prevent even enemy scouts from observing our main body.

The nature of security missions clearly places them in the target servicing functional area. In a sense, security is also an economy of force mission when performed by cavalry in that much larger units of other types would be required to cover the frontages involved. Cavalry fulfills the doctrinal precept that initial contact should be made with the smallest possible element.

Economy of Force. This term is widely used in current doctrinal discussion to describe the "thinning out" of so-called "risk areas" in order to make as many units as possible available at the critical point. Such use is correct, but "Economy of Force" is a much broader concept than that. As applied to cavalry, it has become almost a euphemism to describe whatever job the force commander wants done and has no other unit available to do.

Cavalry is eminently well suited for some share of the total spectrum of target-servicing combat functions by virtue of its great organizational flexibility, small

unit self-reliance, and heavy firepower. It is ready at hand for such missions by virtue of its great mobility and the fact that it reports directly to higher command levels than do other units of the same size. The only battalion-sized fighting force available to a division commander without going through a brigade is his cavalry squadron, and cavalry regiments work directly for corps commanders. "Fire brigade" responses to unexpected threats or opportunities, therefore, are so frequent as almost to become the rule rather than the exception.

Whenever a small unit performs a task which would otherwise require a larger unit, "Economy of Force" has been achieved. Opportunities for this arise in both offensive and defensive contexts. We have already noted the economy achieved by organizing cavalry for semi-autonomous platoon operations in reconnaissance and security in order to cover broad fronts which would otherwise absorb unaffordable numbers of units. Examples are commonplace of armored cavalry troops relieving battalion task forces and air cavalry troops or armored cavalry squadrons relieving brigades, or even divisions, so that the latter can move to the critical point. Other examples might include seizing a key bridge or defile needed for the passage of a large attacking force, making a feint or other deception, seizing a fleeting counterattack opportunity when no other unit is available, plugging a gap opened in our defenses by enemy action, or simply concentrating to reinforce tank and mechanized infantry units at the critical point. The possibilities are unlimited for a force which includes all the elements of modern land combat - scouts and aero-reconnaissance elements which can fight as infantry, tanks, attack helicopters, mortars, and field artillery - within its troops and squadrons.

SUMMARY. The contributions of armored and air cavalry to modern combat, ~~then~~ are:

➔ Reconnaissance to enable the commander to "see the battlefield" in clearer detail than his sensors can yet achieve and to develop the

CONT ➔

ABSTRACT

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→ situation or react to the resultant intelligence over a broad front without diverting other combat forces from their primary missions;

→ Security to ensure the main body against surprise and interference in either offense or defense, again without diverting other fighting units from their tasks, and

→ Economy of force as the division and corps commander's 'fire brigade' to cover gaps, secure risk areas, seize opportunities, and respond to sudden threats, all without distracting other units from their roles at the critical point.

↑
Abstract